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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on a project designed to reduce child care worker turnover at a residential treatment center by the development and introduction of a 5-day, on-the-job training curriculum for beginning child care workers. It describes the on-the-job training program which used experienced child care workers who displayed supervisory potential as guides to introduce new employees to the principles of basic cottage management. The setting of the project is described as a private residential treatment center which provides a therapeutic community for the treatment of 400 severely emotionally disturbed and developmentally disabled children, adolescents, and young adults. The problem of recruiting, training, and retaining quality direct-care staff is discussed and studies of staff turnover are reviewed. A comparative analysis is described which compared controllable turnover rates of new child care workers who were hired before (N=223) and after (N=142) the program implementation. Results are discussed which showed that, since implementation of the program: (1) personnel responded favorably to the on-the-job training program; (2) there was an overall reduction in the Controllable Turnover rate across all demographic factors; (3) males and persons with post-secondary education were reported as higher turnover risks; and (4) an increase in promotions from within was experienced. (Author/NB)

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PROJECT REPORT: ON-THE-JOB TRAINING AND ENHANCED CAREER PROGRESSION AS INTERVENTIONS FOR DIRECT CARE STAFF TURNOVER

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Thomas E. Doriety

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ABSTRACT

Job-related factors were identified as related to an increase in the turnover rate of Child Care Workers. The author designed and implemented a 5-day, on-the-job training program utilizing experienced Child Care Workers as 'Guides' to introduce new employees to the basic principles of cottage management. Experienced workers with supervisory potential were identified and given the opportunity to receive managerial experience and be considered for supervisory openings. Computer files were established for the storage and retrieval of Demographic data on direct-care staff. An examination was made of Demographic factors as determinants of turnover. Personnel data indicated a favorable response to the OJT program. An overall reduction was seen in the Controllable Turnover rate across all Demographic factors. Males were reported as higher turnover risks as well as persons with post-secondary education. An increase in promotions from within was experienced.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.

The objective of this project was to reduce Child Care Worker (CCW) turnover at a residential treatment center by the development and introduction of a five-day, on-the-job training (OJT) curriculum for beginning CCW's. The OJT program utilized experienced CCW's who displayed supervisory potential as Mentors (Guides) to introduce new employees to the principles of basic cottage management. Supervisory interaction with new employees was specifically programmed for the purposes of feedback. Such interaction was also programmed with the Guides so that Unit Supervisors could provide advice and receive feedback concerning new employees. Guides were then considered for supervisory openings before searching outside the agency.

The setting of the project was a private residential treatment center accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospitals (JCAH), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the Southern Association of Independent Schools, and the Department of Defense CHAMPUS Program. The Center provides a therapeutic community for the treatment of 400 severely emotionally disturbed and developmentally disabled children, adolescents, and young adults, and integrates a humanistic approach to Milieu Therapy.

The Center employs 130 full-time child care workers who provide sleep-in, direct care in thirty-six cottages and a forty-five bed maximum care facility. Eighteen unit supevisors are responsible for the smooth daily functioning of residential units while five campus supervisors oversee the residential operation, reporting to the Program Director.

CHAPTER II: STUDY OF THE PROBLEM.

Recruiting, training, and retaining quality direct-care staff is one of the most important missions facing facility administrators. Data from a survey conducted by Scheerenberger (1976) show that direct-care staff comprise 75% of all facility personnel and about one half of facility budgets. Child care worker turnover represents a loss of facility investment in the form of higher employee replacement cost. In economic terms, turnover represents a significant cost factor in both large and small agencies. Position replacement costs average over $500 per employee in small settings (those under 400 beds) and just under $600 for larger facilities (George and Baumeister, 1981).

There is also circumstantial evidence to support the conclusion that worker stability is a key element with respect to institutional programming. Norman(1975) reported that across four state facilities, a direct relationship was found between tenure and supervisory evaluations of worker quality. King, Raynes, and Tizard (1971) observed that, on the average, a resident would see and have to adjust to twenty new caretakers over a six-month period. Some multi-variate studies lend support to the position that continuity of care is a crucial component in the positive residential setting (Balla, Butterfield, and Zigler, 1974; McCormick, Balla, and Zigler, 1975).

In preparation for a survey conducted by the JCAH, a summary of agency termination statistics was compiled by the personnel department of this facility. The numbers recorded for the period beginning January 1, 1982, and ending September 17, 1984, indicated that Total Annual Turnover of child care workers was 73.9%.

Turnover can be an elusive term to define. Measurement varies from study to study. Van der Merwe and Miller (1975), reviewing the development of turnover measures, recommended distinguishing controllable turnover from uncontrollable turnover. Focusing on controllable losses permits a more precise examination of employee withdrawal behavior that is, in a sense, preventable.

For the purposes of this project, controllable turnover was defined as the percentage of direct-care staff who resigned or were dismissed for reasons other than disability or death, after completing the established agency probationary period of ninety days. Employees leaving prior to that time do so for reasons which are less clear and less controllable. Such employees also represent less of an investment of training dollars and have not yet developed emotional relationships with clients.

Applying the above definition to the agency termination figures for the period, a Controllable Turnover rate of 40% was rendered. With agency figures of 73.9% for Total Turnover and 40% for Controllable Turnover, it is necessary to compare them to similarly derived figures on a national scale.

Ross (1984) studied the relationship of two sets of factors to child care worker turnover. Twenty residential treatment centers in four states were examined over the course of one year. The subjects were 318 full-time CCW's who had worked at least one month.

Demographic variables studied included age, sex, education, and prior experience. Job Related variables included rate of pay, work conditions, and probability for advancement.

In the Ross study, Controllable Turnover was defined as the percentage of direct-care staff who resigned or were dismissed for reasons other than illness, death, or pregnancy after completing one month of employment. Ross reported an annual Controllable Turnover rate of 20% for the agencies examined.

Bensberg and Barnett (1966) surveyed 37 residential facilities serving the mentally retarded in Georgia, Florida, and Alabama. Using a definition of Controllable Turnover similar to that of Ross, an annual Controllable Turnover rate of 30% was reported over five calendar years.

In comparison to the rates of Controllable Turnover reported by Ross (1984) and Bensberg and Barnett (1966), the calculated rate for the Center under discussion was unacceptably higher.

Contributing factors to turnover are many. A review of the literature did not yield a consensus of opinion for any one causal factor, but rather an interrelationship of several factors.

Whittaker (1971) addressed some of the factors he felt strongly about when writing:

> "The sheer physical and mental effort required to work with children in a group-life setting makes retirement at age 25 a reasonable goal. It is also true that many child care workers lead a double life as students, and this tends to cause rapid turnover in the ranks of people who graduate and move on to new professions. There is another reason why child care workers leave the field after a few years: There is no career ladder to climb, no salary increases beyond a certain point, and no chance to participate in the decision making structure. Unfortunately, some who stay, do so for the wrong reasons, become resistant to change, and feed into the whole myth that child care work is by definition something you do in your early twenties unless you are unable to get work elsewhere."

The career ladder has been difficult to climb for this Center's CCW's. As of September 17, 1984, the percentage of active supervisors (unit and campus) who were promoted from the CCW position was a mere 21.4% (3/14). Those responsible for hiring or promoting personnel to supervisory positions (Personnel Director and Program Director) felt that movement from CCW to supervisor (promotion from within) was generally unsuccessful because no formal method had been developed at this facility to identify those with supervisory potential and provide them with managerial training or experience.

Findings reported in the Ross study lend some credence to Whittaker's commentary. Ross found that CCW's under the age of 26 tended to turnover quicker than any other group, and they were less affected by agency attempts at improvement in Job Related factors. On the other hand, employees over the age of 26 tended to turnover less frequently, and the turnover rate was reduced when Job Related factors were improved.

Local economic conditions have a bearing on turnover. A relationship of this nature has been postulated by York-Moore (1970) and Butterfield (1967) and empirically examined by Butterfield, Barnett, and Bensberg (1966) who found that ".. nearly half of the variance in turnover rate is accounted for by the availability of other jobs..".

Another factor in child care worker retention is the expanded scope of job responsibility. Maier (1957) and Whittaker (1970) have examined the development of the CCW beginning with the matron of the orphanage of the 19th century. Today, modern residential care has added several components to the job. The Child Welfare League (1963), Hromadka (1966), and Maier (1963) have delineated four dimensions of child care tasks:

"1. Care and maintainance of the childrens' every-day requirements.
(physical care and safety, hygiene, etc.)

2. Therapeutic care and extraordinary requirements.
(individual counseling, teaching, etc.)

3. Leadership and management of group life.
(group functioning as cohesive unit.)

4. Implementation of total agency program.
(staff meetings, milieu programs, documentation, etc.)"

The most significant and practical point of intervention seems to be during the initial employment period. During this time, a socialization process seems to occur between agency and employee (Caplow, 1964; Feldmen, 1976; Porter et. al., 1975).

> "Early in the entry period, new employees tend to encounter crises and the likelihood of remaining with the organization is dependent upon successfully passing through this period. If this transitional period is not smooth, a portion of the workforce will be constantly changing, and/or the organization will be saddled with maladjusted workers not content in their jobs and who, for this reason, will be less productive. If a goal of the institution is to recruit a stable and productive workforce, the developmental foundation laid by formal and informal assimilation of the worker into the organization should be a preeminent concern of the management." (Zaharia and Baumeister, 1978)

CHAPTER III: ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS.

By implementing a five-day, on-the-job training program throughout the Residential Department of a community-based treatment program, the following goals were projected:

1. The rate of Controllable CCW Turnover will be measured within the range of reported findings nationally (20 - 30%) on February 1, 1986.
2. The percentage of residential supervisors promoted from the CCW position (within) will increase by at least 25 percentage points (46.4%) on February 1, 1986.
3. Through the use of a computer filing system developed by this writer, the findings of Ross (1984) will be verified (Demographic data as a predictor of turnover probability).

SOLUTION STRATEGIES.

Under the previous orientation system at this Center, novice workers were given eight hours of pre-service lectures. The focus of which was to provide knowledge about the policies, procedures, and philosophy of the institution, as well as policies regarding the administration of medications and seizure management. All of which is vital information necessary to the new worker, but much more was needed. Studt and Russell (1958) suggest that it is evident from an analysis of the expanded scope of the job that if training is to affect problems with such multiple dimensions as found in cottage group life, it is not sufficient to set up meetings where staff are 'talked at'.

Unit supervisors at this Center are directly responsible for orienting new staff to specific cottage duties, but prior to September of 1984, orientation to specific cottage duties was not clearly delineated and not delivered in a uniform manner throughout the facility. New CCW's were placed in a cottage with more experienced workers where training occurred on an 'as encountered' basis. Little time was allotted in the supervisors' work day to directly observe new CCW's. Feedback was neglected despite its importance.

The task confronting this agency was to reduce the turnover rate of child care workers (where possible) by improving the orientation delivered to new workers and providing more opportunity for career advancement to experienced workers. The question was how to deliver such orientation and offer opportunity cost effectively.

Should training for new employees be delivered in a classroom setting or on-the-job? As with so many program (and business) decisions, the dilemma over which type of training to use boils down to a comparison of costs and benefits.

> Mangum (1985) suggests, "..one basic difference between class-room and OJT training is the higher start-up costs of classroom methods. The fixed costs may include the expense of building or renting training facilities, developing courses, and purchasing equipment to simulate the work environment in a classroom setting. Some of these costs are avoided by OJT because equipment and facilities for service and training delivery are one in the same."

Mangum further proposes some guidelines when choosing among alternative training techniques:

> 1. When training a large number of individuals, the fixed costs of classroom based training are spread across many trainees.
>
> 2. When training involves expensive equipment and the demand for skilled workers is uncertain, OJT becomes a more attractive option. Since class-room training involves lengthy lead times and possibly expensive equipment or facilities, low demand (slack periods in hiring) could spell substantial losses.
>
> 3. When simulating the work environment is a costly proposition, OJT is probably the best bet. If inadequate job performance could damage equipment or detract from services, classroom training minimizes the likelihood of such performance failures. When a simulated vs. actual work environment in training is more likely to produce poor performance, resulting in negative consequences, OJT is the better choice.

Who should be responsible for delivering training on-the-job? Whittaker (1971) asked child care workers, "Whom do you consider most helpful as a supervisor?"

> "Overwhelmingly, the response indicated that the most desireable supervisors were persons who were either child care workers themselves or other professionals who had recently been CCW's. One obvious implication of this study is to use experienced CCW's as trainers. The more experienced staff possess the kind of information the new worker needs to know in order to carry out the role within the institution. These include such things as the rules and mores of the agency, some simple behavior management techniques, and some knowledge of activities to do with children. In a very real sense the experienced worker becomes a role model for the novice and offers a living example of at least one style of relating to the children."

Rosenbaum (1984) cautions that some may worry unnecessarily that modeled behavior is presented as the way to handle all related situations, ".. but behavior modeling practioners position the model only as a point of reference. Modeled activities serve as 'guides' for appropriate performance and not as lockstep imperatives."

In preparation for this project, a computer filing system was developed by this writer to aid in the retrieval and manipulation of personnel data. An examination of personnel records was made possible with the cooperation of the Director of Personnel. The following categories of full-time CCW's were included in the implementation and evaluation of this practicum:

* All CCW's presently employed at this facility.
* All CCW's hired since January 1, 1982, and who completed the 90-day probationary period before seperating from the Center for reasons other than disability or death.

The following information was recorded on computer disk for each of the above-described CCW's (Appendix D):

Demographic - Age, Sex, Education Level, and Prior Experience.
Job Related - Probationary Evaluation, Annual Evaluation, Promotion History, Longevity.

Authorization was received from the Associate Director responsible for training and the Program Director to develop and implement an on-the-job training program to be delivered to all new CCW's during their first five days of employment. Each week anywhere from 3-6 new CCW's begin working at this facility. Workers are spread out across six residential units and eventually work with children displaying varying degrees of organic and emotional impairment. Because of the irregularity of CCW hiring and the unacceptable cost of simulating cottage life in a classroom setting, the on-the-job approach was chosen.

The curriculum development process involved meeting with CCW's

The curriculum development process involved meeting with CCW's and supervisors to identify job knowledge and skill requirements for new employees. From this meeting a list of concepts was developed for introduction to new CCW's during their first week on the job: the cottage routine, emergency procedures, documentation, supply management, and outdoor supervision.

All agreed that these were the concepts immediately necessary for new workers. Using the above concepts, a five-day curriculum was developed whereby new employees would be introduced to a new concept each day and review it the next. Additionally, new CCW's were scheduled to meet with a unit supervisor for 45 minutes prior to the duty day to review the events of the previous day and preview the schedule for the present day. During the supervisory conference, new employees discussed with supervisors unclear situations and were questioned about the information imparted to them.

The choice of trainers was based on two factors, the first being a review of the current literature. Research indicates (Whittaker, 1971) those best suited to train CCW's are those who have recently worked as CCW's. Kostelnik (1980) states: "Strategies which can be demonstrated have a higher rate of internalization than those which are simply explained or discussed."

The second factor in selecting trainers was in response to the absence of a formal process for identifying and training those with supervisory potential. Child care workers are experienced motivators of children. Using them to train new employees gives them experience in adult motivation and may help prepare them to become competent supervisors.

Cleland and Peck (1967) and Sarata (1975) give suggestions for worker stimulation which they feel should be examined systematically for impact on turnover, particularly, educational sabbaticals, role variations, formalized training functions, and small caseload assignments. Such job redesign approaches have been explored in industry since the 1950's under the rubrics of 'job enrichment' and 'job enlargement' (Scott and Mitchell, 1976).

The criteria for staff selection as a Guide were developed by direct care and supervisory staff and are as follows:

1. Completion of one year of service as a CCW.
2. Completion of all workshops offered by the Center.
3. Not more than 2 unexcused absences in the past year.
4. Rank within the top quarter on the last annual supervisory evaluation.

Using the above criteria, 18 CCW's were selected (3 from each residential unit) from 130 full-time staff to act as Guides. Unit supervisors, under the supervision of this writer, trained the Guides as to the curriculum content and format for delivery of pertinent information to new staff. Unit supervisors remain constantly available to advise Guides on appropriate methods for dealing with typical staff problems and to receive suggestions for curriculum revision.

CHAPTER V: RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

During the period beginning January 1, 1982, and ending September 17, 1984, two hundred and twenty-three (223) CCW's were hired. Eighty-six (86) completed at least 3 months of employment and did not separate due to disability or death. Personnel data on the 86 were recorded on computer disk and will be referred to as the Pre-OJT group.

During the period beginning September 17, 1984, and ending April 17, 1986, one hundred and forty-two (142) CCW's were hired and participated in the 5-day OJT program. Ninety-five completed at least 3 months of employment and did not separate under the above-mentioned conditions. Data for these employees were also recorded on computer disk and will be referred to as the Post-OJT group.

A simple comparison of Pre- and Post-OJT group Controllable Turnover rates revealed the following:

Pre-OJT group:	40%
Post-OJT group:	26.3%

The percentage of supervisors promoted from the CCW position on September 17, 1984, was 21.4% (3/14). That percentage increased to 50% as of April 17, 1986.

The Controllable Turnover rate decreased dramatically and now falls within the range of reported national averages (20-30%). The percentage of supervisors promoted from the CCW position increased beyond the projected figure (46.4%) to 50%. It is possible to attribute some of the reduction in Controllable Turnover to the 5-day OJT program. Other working conditions, such as hours, starting salary, policies, and procedures remain generally the same.

The above comparisons were made in Job Related factors as determinants of CCW turnover. From them it can be inferred that improvements made in initial training and probability of career advancement will predict a reduction in the Controllable Turnover rate.

Demographic factors were also examined as predictors of CCW turnover. Figure 1 shows four Demographic factors and the percentage of Controllable Turnover which took place within each risk group of each factor. Each factor was divided into two risk groups (High/Low) reflecting the findings of Ross (1984):

PRE-OJT GROUP

	AGE	SEX	EDUCATION	PRIOR EXPERIENCE
High Risk	26- 38.9%	M 53.8%	HS+ 59.4%	Yes 46.4%
Low Risk	26+ 33.8%	F 26.7%	HS 20.4%	No 29.3%

POST-OJT GROUP

	AGE	SEX	EDUCATION	PRIOR EXPERIENCE
High Risk	26- 18.9%	M 36.7%	HS+ 25%	Yes 21.4%
Low Risk	26+ 15.8%	F 13.9%	HS 6.5%	No 14.9%

FIGURE 1.

It should be noted that age was not a clear determinant of CCW turnover in either group. Prior experience was a better determinant of CCW turnover, but in an unexpected way. It seems that in both groups, those with any prior experience in Human Service positions (Mental Health, Social Work, Child Care, etc.) were more likely to turnover than those without.

The best determinants of Controllable Turnover were found to be Sex and Level of Education. Males were twice as likely to turnover in the Pre-OJT group and almost 3 times as likely to turnover in the Post-OJT group.

Those CCW's possessing a High School diploma and no post-secondary education were 3 times as likely to remain as those completing one or more years of post-secondary education in the Pre-OJT group and almost 4 times as likely to remain in the Post-OJT group.

Ross (1984) reported no significant difference between those with or without prior experience in Human Service positions. One explanation might be those hired with prior Human Service experience could be experiencing 'burnout'. It would be necessary to examine closer the work history of applicants with prior Human Service experience.

Ross does identify males as a higher turnover risk than women and more educated CCW's as a higher turnover risk than those with less education. The findings of this project concur with those of Ross on these two Demographic factors. The OJT Program seems to have had an effect across all Demographic factors in that a reduction was seen in each risk group measured after program implementation. This observation conflicts with the findings of Ross (1984) who reported the most reliable predictors of Controllable Turnover were Demographic factors (age, sex, and level of education).

The lowest percentage of Controllable Turnover was found in high school graduates with no post-secondary education in the Post-OJT group. This concurs with Ross' findings that less educated CCW's are more amenable to interventions in Job Related factors because their expectations of the job are more in line with the reality of the job than more educated counterparts.

It is evident that the combination of on-the-job training for new employees and improved possibility for career advancement for more experienced CCW's has had a positive overall effect on the Controllable Turnover rate of CCW's at this facility.

Results of this project indicate that cottage-based programs should consider the use of the OJT style orientation for new staff. An effort should be made by personnel departments to examine closely the work history of those applicants with prior Human Service experience. Such an examination should focus on signs of recurring burnout and those applicants who move from one job to another quickly.

Future studies should attempt to identify reasons for the degree of variance between the turnover rates of males and females. Reducing the Controllable Turnover rate of males will allow them to play a more stable role in the therapeutic care of children.

A serious effort should be put forth by agencies, professional associations, and educational institutions to develop "step plan" and career progression models for direct care staff.

In cooperation with the Administrative Director a graduated pay scale is being prepared to reflect the career progression of CCW's to the Guide position and eventually to unit supervisor. Plans are also being made to include the formal Job Title, Description, and Requirements of the Guide position in the next revision of this facility's personnel manual.

Proper orientation of new employees and professional career paths for those with experience will benefit agencies through reduced costs, child care workers through professionalization, and ultimately the children and youth in care through more competent and dedicated staff.

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REPLACEMENT COSTS PER EMPLOYEE

PERSONNEL DEPT. (interviews, testing, clerical, etc.)	$38.75
ADVERTISING	12.50
BUSINESS OFFICE (changes in payroll, benefits, etc.)	10.00
PHYSICAL EXAM	20.00
TRAINING (pre-service and orientation during the probationary period)	445.00
	$526.25

THE TRAINING VALUE MODEL

THE REPLACEMENT COST METHOD

PRE-OJT (Replacement costs) (for the year)		POST-OJT (% of reduction in) (controllable T.O.)		Relative savings ($)
$18,418.75	X	0.35	=	$6,446.50

(Cost of supv.) (participation)		(Wage increases) (for Guides)		Cost of OJT program
$1,500.00	+	$2,000.00	=	$3,500.00

RELATIVE SAVINGS		COST OF OJT PROGRAM		TOTAL ECON. BENEFIT TO AGENCY
$6,446.50	-	3,500.00	=	$2,946.50

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THE HIGH COST OF TURNOVER:
AN OUTLINE FOR ATTACKING THE PROBLEM

DEFINE THE PROBLEM

COLLECT DATA - RAW HIRE/FIRE STATS

COMPARISON

LOCAL - REGIONAL - NATIONAL

ARE YOUR FINDINGS IN LINE WITH OTHERS

DEFINE AGENCY CONTROLLABLE TURNOVER

FOR SOPHISTICATION USE DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN

CALCULATE REPLACEMENT COST

INCLUDE ALL COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH

REPLACING LOST EMPLOYEES

DEFINE TARGET POPULATION MOST VULNERABLE TO TURNOVER

REFER TO DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

IDENTIFY FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO TURNOVER

AGENCY SPECIFIC

FORM SOLUTION STRATEGY

PRIORITIZE — **LIKELIHOOD OF SUCCESS**

COST EFFECTIVENESS — **MEASURABILITY**

AGENCY RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

APPENDIX G
DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS

PRE-OJT GROUP

	AGE	SEX	EDUCATION	PRIOR EXPERIENCE
Cell 1	26+ 33.8%	M 53.8%	HS 20.4%	Y 46.4%
Cell 2	26- 38.9%	F 26.7%	HS+ 59.4%	N 29.3%

POST-OJT GROUP

	AGE	SEX	EDUCATION	PRIOR EXPERIENCE
Cell 1	26+ 18.9%	M 36.7%	HS 6.5%	Y 21.4%
Cell 2	26- 15.8%	F 13.9%	HS+ 25%	N 14.9%

CONTROLLABLE TURNOVER

PRE-OJT GROUP	40%	(35/86)
POST-OJT GROUP	26.3%	(25/95)